



WATERways

Public Works Department, Stormwater & GIS Services Division

Volume 23, Number 1: July 2019

Clean car, dirty water?

Most weekends you can drive through Durham and see people washing their cars. Often, you can see clues that a car is being washed before you see it happening - soapy water flowing down the street. This water, along with the soap and grime it carries, is most likely running into a nearby storm drain. This water flows straight into our rivers and creeks. It does **not** get treated or cleaned first!

The grime that comes off cars contains toxic chemicals from paint, exhaust, brake pads, grease and oils. Soap harms fish and other aquatic life. The waste water from washing your car needs to be kept out of the storm drain. There is no problem with washing your car. It is just how and where you do it that matters.

The easiest way to clean your car in an environmentally friendly way is to take your car to a commercial car wash. Professional car washes are better for the environment because their waste water goes through an oil-water separator then to the sanitary sewer and a treatment plant.

They also use high pressure nozzles and pumps that conserve water. Car washes use about 60 percent less water to wash a car than

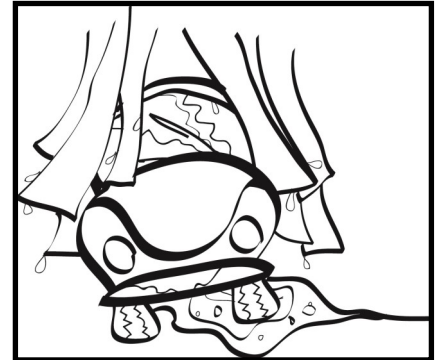
washing it at home with a hose. Look for a car wash that recycles its waste water to be even more environmentally conscious.

If you use a mobile car wash business, be sure to ask if they collect the wash water and dispose of it properly. Mobile washes set up in parking lots should have a way to collect dirty water. Many use a tarp and pump.

If you prefer to wash your car at home, the following tips will help you protect our rivers and streams.

For “Greener” Car Washing:

- ⇒ Wash your car where the water will drain to a landscaped or grassy area. Avoid having soapy wash water flow down the driveway or street into the storm drain.
- ⇒ Try using waterless car wash products. These don't require soapy suds or a water supply.
- ⇒ Don't let water flow the whole time you are washing. Use nozzles on your hoses that automatically turn off the water when you are not using it.



- ⇒ Use a biodegradable soap. Look for labels that say “phosphate free,” “non-toxic,” or “biodegradable.” Avoid products with: phosphates, petroleum-distillates, kerosene, silicone or mineral spirits. Citrus or vegetable based soaps are the best choices for the environment.
- ⇒ Use the smallest amount of soap possible. Elbow grease and water can take care of most grime on a car. Using less soap not only helps the environment, it also saves you money!
- ⇒ Use a bucket of soapy water to wet your sponge or rag. Wring your sponge or rag back into the bucket to keep dirty water out of the storm drain. The water in these buckets should be disposed of in the sanitary sewer. This can be done by using an inside drain such as a sink or toilet.
- ⇒ Avoid the use of acid-based wheel cleaners.

Durham Stormwater Info - Where to Find It

Stormwater Utility Fee

durhamnc.gov/814

Check out the utility fee map that shows you the total impervious surface and annual rate for your property's stormwater bill. Also see answers to Frequently Asked Questions about your bill.

Floodplain Information

durhamnc.gov/978

Links to mapped floodplains, flood insurance information, and who to call with questions.

Watershed Plans

durhamnc.gov/919

See the new "Working Towards Healthy Watersheds" handout and find the latest on plans to improve Durham watersheds.

State of Our Streams

durhamnc.gov/708

How many pollution sources did the City control last year through water quality investigations? What is the city-wide water quality index? The annual State of Our Streams report has the answers.

STAR Businesses

durhamnc.gov/796

Meet Durham's 59 Stormwater STAR businesses. Many familiar names anchor this list of local businesses that are doing their part to protect water.

South Ellerbe Stormwater Restoration Update

The City is actively working toward building the South Ellerbe Stormwater Restoration at 808 West Trinity Avenue. Staff members are coordinating with other City departments and outside agencies on soil excavation planning, securing permits, and coordinating utilities. Contractors completed building demolition in December 2018. They removed two underground storage tanks. Stop by the project site to view wetland-themed artwork created by local students. Learn more at durhamnc.gov/1616.



Public Works Department - Stormwater and GIS Services

(919) 560-4326 - <http://durhamnc.gov/stormwater>

Report Water Pollution: stormwaterquality@durhamnc.gov or (919) 560-SWIM

Questions about Stormwater Utility Fee: stormwaterfee@durhamnc.gov or Durham One Call: (919) 560-1200
Development Review - Drainage Concerns - GIS - Surface Water Quality - Watershed Implementation

Notice Under the Americans with Disabilities Act: Persons who require assistance should call (919) 560-4197, ext. 21254, TTY (919) 560-1200 or email ADA@durhamnc.gov no later than 48 hours before the event.